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# THE STORY OF WEDGWOOD 1730-1930



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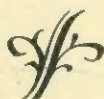
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*The Story of*  
**WEDGWOOD**

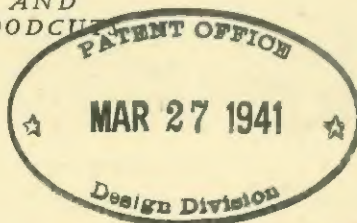
1730-1930

WITH A FOREWORD BY  
SIR OLIVER LODGE, F.R.S



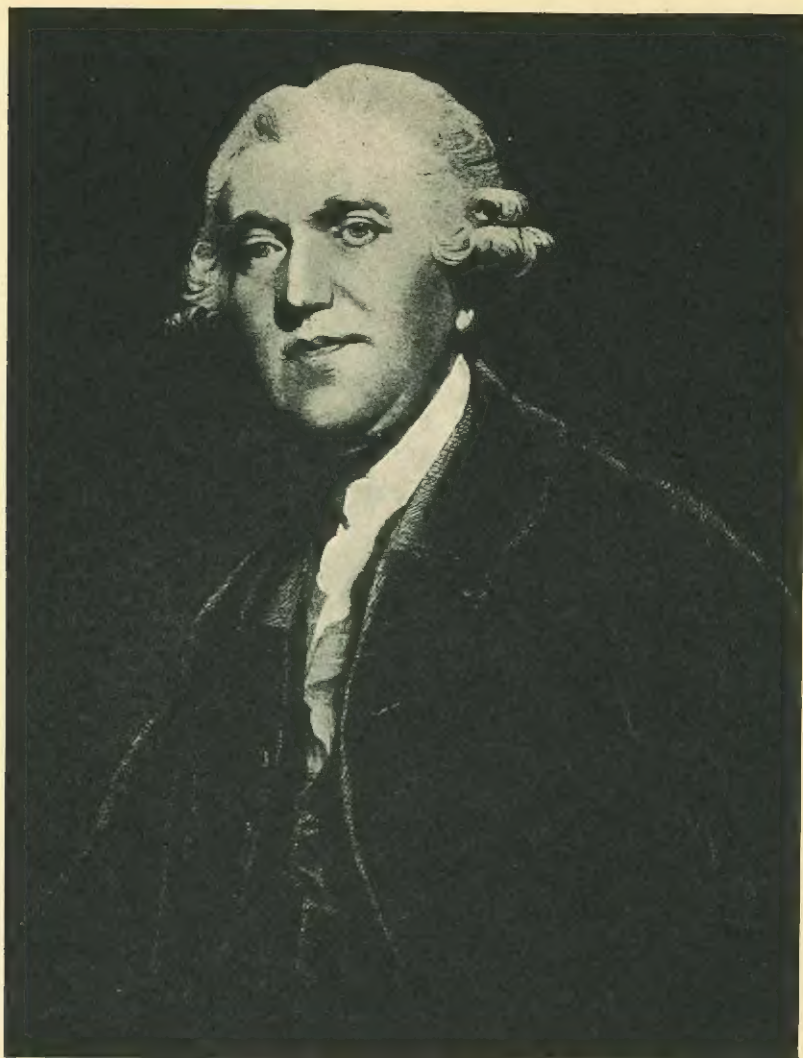
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ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND  
WOODCUTS



*Second Edition*





JOSIAH WEDGWOOD, F.R.S.


*From the Portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds  
(In the possession of Mr. H. Vaughan-Williams).*

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## FOREWORD

By SIR OLIVER LODGE, F.R.S.

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*As a native of North Staffordshire, and with a youth spent travelling about on mercantile business in the Potteries district, I have been invited to write a few words in commemoration of the Bicentenary of the greatest benefactor to that district—a man who, by natural genius and pertinacious industry, effected so many improvements that he may be regarded as the founder of modern pottery manufacture. Documentary evidence shows that he was constantly engaged in planning new developments; incidentally making chemical experiments, seeking for a whiter body and better glaze, thinking over every detail of the manufacture, and travelling on geological excursions in search of raw material that could be pressed into the service; and he conducted all this research with a success that entitled him to the Fellowship of that exclusively scientific body The Royal Society.*

*It was not for nothing that the Wedgwoods and the Darwins were closely connected in friendship, and ultimately in more intimate relationship. Members of the Darwin family have been conspicuously responsible for improving natural knowledge by great discoveries: the Wedgwood family have been pioneers in establishing a great industry. Wedgwood and Darwin were both characterised by features*

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## FOREWORD

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*somewhat in common, a thoughtful pertinacity, indomitable industry, and a benevolent shrewdness, which have left their mark on succeeding generations.*

*There are few men of whom it can be said that they have converted a rude and unpromising beginning into an enterprise of national magnitude. But there are some; and the history of their achievements is a worthy study. Tastes change, and the industry changes with them. Elasticity and Progress are the features of all successful undertakings. Even in my own lifetime the advances made and improvements effected, both in human welfare and in scientific directions, in the Pottery district, are very noticeable. To this all in some degree have contributed. The Federated Towns are a corporate achievement. There need be no jealousy or hesitation in doing honour to a simple-hearted successful labourer for the welfare of his beloved industry and the benefit of humanity.*

OLIVER J. LODGE

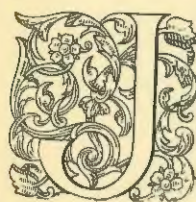


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# *The Story of* **WEDGWOOD**

1730-1930

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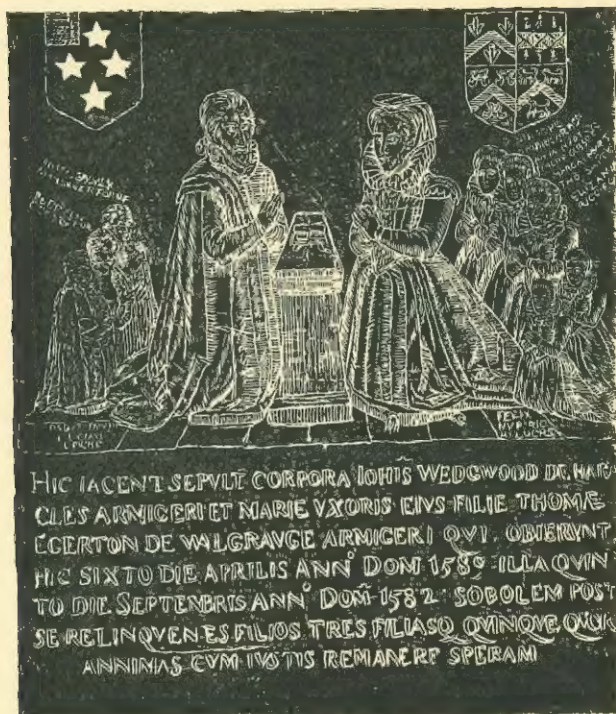


OSIAH WEDGWOOD was born at Burslem in Staffordshire (the oldest, and then the only town of "the Potteries") and was the youngest and thirteenth child of Thomas and Mary Wedgwood, of the Churchyard Works. The exact date of his birth is not known, but he was christened on July 12th, 1730, at Burslem Parish Church—and, in those days of high infant mortality, very little time elapsed between a birth and a baptism.

He came from a race of yeomen copyholders, who had taken up potting first, as a subsidiary industry, in the time of James I. So Josiah Wedgwood himself was the great-great-grandson of a potter—Gilbert Wedgwood. The latter had moved to Burslem about 1612, when he married the heiress of the squire of Burslem, from whose family there came into the hands of Gilbert and his sons, a pot-bank and estate of some 200 acres. The Wedgwood copyhold was previously a few miles to the north of Burslem on the side of the hill known as Mow Cop, where there had been Wedgwoods since the 13th century and where a farm named "Wedgwood" exists to this day.

Gilbert described himself as "potter" in 1649—we know nothing of his wares. His son Thomas bought land in Burslem and built a new little factory complete with "workhouses, shops and ovens" and "a horse mill." It was at the old Churchyard Works, next door to Burslem Church, that Josiah's father and grandfather—both of them Thomas's—carried on their business. But the best-known Wedgwood potters prior to Josiah were the latter's cousins, Dr. Thomas Wedgwood senior and junior (1655-1717 and 1695-1737), whose salt-glazed ware achieved a considerable reputation.

Josiah's father does not appear to have been a successful potter. He died when Josiah was 9 years old, leaving a legacy of £20 to each of his seven surviving children, which in fact was never payable from his estate.



WEDGWOOD BRASS IN HORTON CHURCH

*Erected about 1596*

Josiah's mother was the daughter of the Unitarian Minister of Newcastle-under-Lyme (a Mr. Stringer), and a woman of more culture and intelligence than most of the daughters of the farmers and potters of that time.



THE DAYS OF SALT-GLAZE AND  
THE PACK HORSE

Josiah's only schooling took place between the ages of 6 and 9 years, when he went to a little school in Newcastle-under-Lyme kept by a Mr. Thomas Blunt, who said that he made Josiah "a fair arithmetician and master of a capital hand."

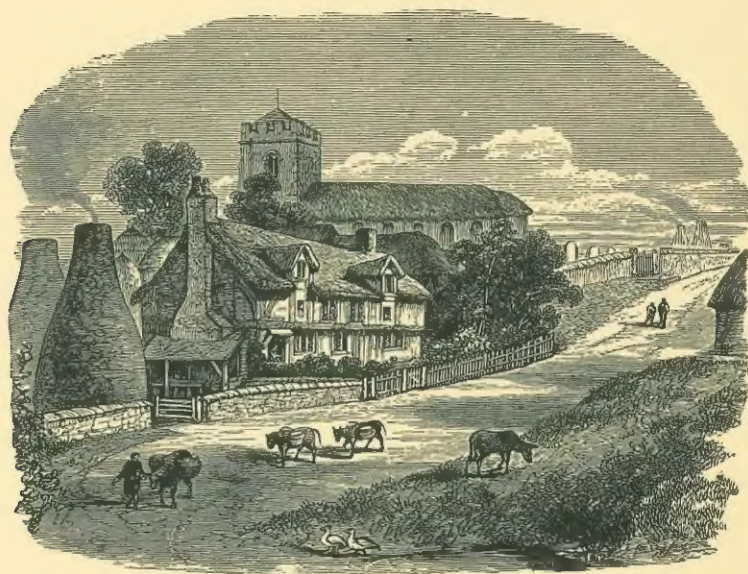
On his father's death in 1739, he was taken from school to start work under his elder brother Thomas, who had succeeded his father as "master" at the Churchyard Works—and five years later, at the age of 14, he became his brother's apprentice, to learn "the Art, Mistery, Occupation or Imployment of Thrower and Handling."

At that time potting was still more or less a peasant craft, though considerable strides in technique and in commerce had been made since the beginning of the 18th century. Thirty years earlier, there had been 50 potbanks in Burslem, and only 7 in Hanley and 2 in Stoke. The average annual turnover of these "factories" was estimated at not more than £150 a year; the average potbank employed less than a dozen workmen, and wages were anything up to 6s. a week. The typical products, at the beginning of the century, were butter-pots, jugs and mugs in cloudy, mottled, black and red bodies, made from local clays, and the drab-coloured salt-glazed stone-ware.

But twenty years before Josiah Wedgwood's apprenticeship, Astbury had introduced flint and blue and white clays from Dorset and Devon to get a whiter and finer body than could be got from Staffordshire clay; and by the time Josiah attained his majority Enoch Booth had produced a fluid lead glaze, that gave a much smoother surface than the salt-glaze potters could achieve.\*

\*Salt-glazing was introduced about 1690, and remained in general use till about 1770. Common salt was shovelled into the oven when red hot, and the salt fumes covered the ware with a colourless soda glaze. With this method, only one fire was necessary both to harden and glaze the pot. With the lead glaze, two fires were given, as to-day—the first or "Biscuit" fire renders earthenware completely hard but still porous. It is then dipped in the fluid glaze and given its "Glost" fire, in the course of which the glaze melts and on cooling leaves a glassy surface.

Thus Astbury, Booth and others laid the foundations of the cream-coloured earthenware, which Josiah Wedgwood's skill was later to make fashionable and famous as the staple product of the Staffordshire Potteries.



THE CHURCHYARD HOUSE AND WORKS, BURSLEM  
*Started by Josiah's great grandfather in the time of Charles II*

In 1750, Staffordshire pottery was of much the same type and had the same limitations as regards utility and range of articles, though the same charm and individuality, as the products of peasant and "handicraft" potters to-day.

The conditions under which the work was done and the products sold were more primitive than those in the remoter parts of Canada to-day, and the district was more isolated. Burslem was then the only one of the



"Five Towns" that could be dignified with the name "town." In 1750 it had only five shops, and general post letters were delivered by an old woman every Sunday from Newcastle-under-Lyme. It had no turn-pike road, and such lanes as there were made every journey an adventure and precluded the use of carts and waggons. Buff and white clays from Dorset and Devon, flint, and plaster of Paris (for moulds) were shipped to Chester or Liverpool and imported from there to the Potteries on pack saddles.

Amusements were of a somewhat brutal kind—bull-baiting, bear-baiting and cock-fighting; and the manners and habits of the citizens received and probably deserved the most scathing censure by John Wesley when he first visited the Potteries about 1760.

Such was the condition of things which Josiah Wedgwood found when he started out on life, and which he was to change out of all recognition.

Three years after his apprenticeship started, an illness—said to be small-pox—attacked him and rendered active work impossible for some time, leaving his knee permanently affected. There is no doubt that he turned this misfortune into an opportunity for reading, and for research and experiment. His letters and pamphlets in later life show education and a gift for clear expression—the fruits, in part at any rate, of this and subsequent periods of enforced inactivity. At the close of his apprenticeship, in 1749, he suggested to his brother that he should continue, as the latter's partner, to pursue his experiments; but Thomas did not consent.

#### THE PARTNERSHIP WITH WHIELDON

#### *Green Glaze and Cauliflower Ware*

There followed a partnership with John Harrison, a tradesman of Newcastle-under-Lyme, who had invested money in a potworks at Stoke, lately belonging to Thomas Alders. His partner's methods were antagonistic to Josiah's nature and the agreement was cancelled after about a year.





THOMAS WHIELDON

1719-1795

*From a print in the possession of Mr. Percy Adams*

SAMPLES OF CAULIFLOWER AND AGATE  
WARE, MADE BY WEDGWOOD IN PART-  
NERSHIP WITH WHIELDON  
*From the Wedgwood Museum, Etruria*



In 1754 a new partnership started, in every way desirable, with Thomas Whieldon of Fenton Low, who was a potter of some considerable distinction and taste and had built up a good business. Whieldon was a man of liberal mind, and in several ways not unlike his young partner; he had the same love of experiment, the same integrity in business, the same genial temper and benevolence. It is evident from the clauses of the partnership and later correspondence that Wedgwood was to pursue his own lines of research, without any obligation to reveal the results of his experiments.

The partnership was interrupted for some months by a return of Wedgwood's previous illness or by some accident that again affected his knee. But the experiments continued and gave rise to the now famous Green Glaze and Cauliflower ware. It was towards the end of this partnership which expired in 1759, that Wedgwood started a full record of his trials in an "Experiment Book." The preface is worth quoting as it illustrates the state of the trade at that time, the types of ware made, and the fact that Wedgwood saw then the nature of the opportunity to be grasped :

"This suite of Experiments was begun at Fenton Hall, in the parish of Stoke-on-Trent, about the beginning of the year 1759, in my partnership with Mr. Whieldon, for the improvement of our manufacture of earthenware, which at that time stood in great need of it, the demand for our goods decreasing daily, and the trade universally complained of as being bad and in a declining condition.

"White Stone Ware was the principal article of our manufacture. But this had been made a long time, and the prices were now reduced so low, that the potters could not afford to bestow much expense upon it or to make it so good in any respect as the ware would otherwise admit of. And with regard to Elegance of form, that was an object very little attended to.

"The next article in consequence to Stone Ware was an imitation of Tortoiseshell. But as no improvement had been made in this branch for several years, the country was grown weary of it; and though the price had been lowered from time to time, in order to

increase the sale, the expedient did not answer, and something new was wanted, to give a little spirit to the business.

"I had already made an imitation of Agate, which was esteemed beautiful and a considerable improvement, but people were surfeited with wares of these variegated colours.



IVY HOUSE AND WORKS  
BURSLEM

"These considerations induced me to try for some more solid improvement, as well in the Body, as the Glazes, the Colours, and the Forms, of the articles of our manufacture.

"I saw the field was spacious, and the soil so good, as to promise an ample recompense to any one who should labour diligently in its cultivation."



Experiment No. 7 in this book records the invention of the previously mentioned Green Glaze ware :

"This No. is the result of many Expts. which I made in order to introduce a new species of coloured ware, to be fired along with the tortoiseshell and Agatewares in our common gloss ovens, to be of an even self colour, and laid upon the ware in the form of a coloured glaze. This No. has been used several years very successfully, in a great variety of articles both for home and foreign consumption."

Others soon acquired the mixture, for undoubtedly Green Glaze was afterwards generally made throughout the Potteries.

#### WEDGWOOD ON HIS OWN

#### *The Rise of the Cream Colour*

In 1759, Wedgwood started on his own account at the Ivy House Works, Burslem, which he rented for £10 a year from his prosperous potter uncles, John and Thomas Wedgwood of the "Big House." In the same year, he engaged his cousin Thomas as manager. Five years later he moved to the Brick House also in Burslem, for which he paid £21 a year. Here, with his cousin Thomas in charge from 1766, he continued to manufacture "useful" as distinct from "ornamental" ware till 1773. This Works became known as the "Bell" Works, because the workmen were summoned by a bell instead of by blowing a horn.

It was in 'useful' ware that Wedgwood first made his name. For the first seven or eight years after leaving Whieldon, he concentrated his experiments on improving the quality and design of Cream-coloured earthenware. The results of these experiments can be seen in the almost universal use of English earthenware to-day. At that time, the success was striking.

The ware was decorated, as to-day, either by printing or by painting with enamels or by a combination of both processes. The printing was done by Sadler and Green in Liverpool, who had invented the process about 1755. The painting was first done by the widow Warburton in Hot Lane, Burslem, or by Phillips and Greaves at Stoke, but later by Wedgwood's own staff of enamellers at Chelsea—and some of the latter's charming hand-painted borders are still executed on modern Wedgwood earthenware.

A friend reported in 1765 that at a dinner with Lord Gower, Wedgwood's "potworks were the subject of conversation for some time, the Cream Colour table services in particular.....it was his Lordship said that nothing of the sort could exceed them for a fine glaze etc." In the same year, there came the first order for Royalty. The order was for a tea-set "with a gold ground and raised flowers upon it in green." The order came from an agent in Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Wedgwood thinks it was brought to him "because nobody else would undertake it." The set was for Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, and subsequent orders pleased her sufficiently well to allow the Cream-Colour to bear in future the proud name of "Queens Ware." In 1767 Wedgwood writes: "all hands in the country are not hired but are still coming to me to know when they must begin.....The demand for this Cream-Colour, *alias* Queens Ware, *alias* Ivory still increases. It is really amazing how rapidly the use of it has spread almost over the whole globe, and how universally it is liked." In 1765 he had opened his first London sample room in Charles Street, Grosvenor Square, under the charge of his brother John.

A further landmark in the history of the Cream-Colour was reached when, in 1774, Wedgwood completed a dinner and dessert service for the Empress Catherine II of Russia. The service consisted of 952 pieces to be decorated with English scenes of which there were 1244 all told. Wedgwood scoured the country for artists to make drawings of all the notable country gentlemen's houses, castles, abbeys and so on. The artists' work and the enamel painting alone cost over £2,000. The whole



PLATES FROM THE SERVICE  
 MADE FOR THE EMPRESS CATHERINE II OF RUSSIA, 1774  
*Lent to the Wedgwood Museum, Etruria*  
*by Mrs. Godfrey Wedgwood*



service was on exhibition at the London showrooms then in Greek Street, Soho, before it was sent out to Russia; and Queen Charlotte paid a visit of inspection. Some of the pieces were loaned by the Tsar of Russia for a



THE BRICK HOUSE OR BELL WORKS

*where Wedgwood made 'useful' ware till 1773*

special Wedgwood Exhibition in London in 1909. A few surplus pieces are now preserved in the Museum at the Wedgwood Works, Etruria, and in Marshall Field's Wedgwood Room in Chicago.

## THE PARTNERSHIP WITH BENTLEY

*The opening of Etruria*

During the early years of the "master potter" while he was still at his first small works at Burslem, he made several journeys on horseback to Liverpool, to buy cobalt, to arrange for the printing by Sadler & Green and for the shipment of his ware to those American Colonies, in whose later independence he so greatly rejoiced. On one of these journeys in 1762, an accident to his already weakened knee laid him up at an Inn in Liverpool. Here he had received treatment by an eminent surgeon, "Matthew Turner," who introduced him to a man of most courtly manner, evidently possessed of high intelligence and good taste, and an excellent conversationist. This was Thomas Bentley, a Liverpool Merchant, who had travelled the Continent, spoke French and Italian, and had a considerable knowledge of Classical and Renaissance Art. Thus started a friendship which was far more than a mere business comradeship, and an almost daily correspondence in which every sorrow and joy, every difficulty and success, were recorded as frankly as in a private diary. Of Bentley's letters, which have unfortunately never been found, Wedgwood wrote with characteristic warmth: "The very feel of them, even before the seal is broke, cheers my heart and does me good.....They inspire me with taste, emulation and everything that is necessary for the production of fine things." Wedgwood's letters to Bentley have luckily been preserved, and reveal the life and unusual charm of character of the writer better than any biographical sketch. Bentley's death in 1780 was, perhaps, the heaviest misfortune in Wedgwood's life.

In 1766, Wedgwood proposed partnership with Bentley, and this was formally agreed to in 1769.

Bentley took charge of a new London Showroom, first near the bottom of St. Martin's Lane, and later in Greek Street, Soho. It was not long before the London rooms became a meeting place for Society ladies. Bentley got

the orders, suggested designs, and supervised the painting at Chelsea, while Wedgwood continued his incessant experiments at the Works. It was through Bentley also, that Wedgwood met Priestley, the scientist, and other well-known men in the world of science and art.



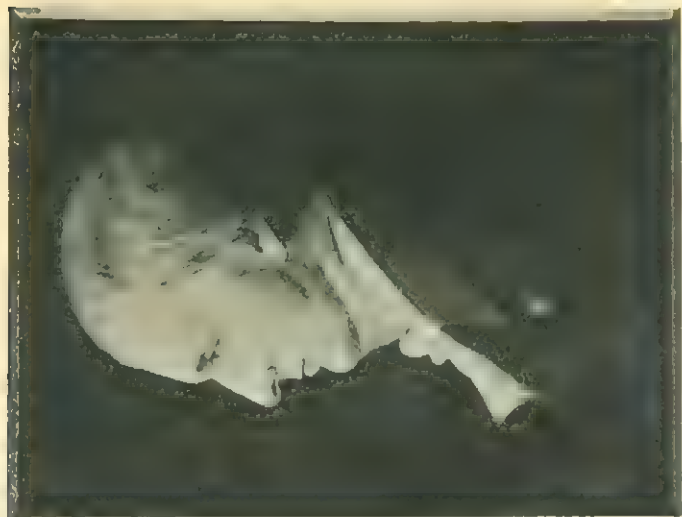
ASTBURY CHURCH, CHESHIRE

Meanwhile Wedgwood had married. His wife was his cousin Sarah, daughter and heiress of Richard Wedgwood of Spen Green. The marriage took place at Astbury Parish Church, Cheshire, on the 25th Jan. 1764. Josiah's letters show that his wife must have been a very charming, able and considerate woman, a real help in his business as well as in his domestic life. She sat in judgment on his new shapes and vases, and





SARAH, WIFE OF JOSIAH WEDGWOOD  
*From the painting*  
*by Sir Joshua Reynolds*



TOM WEDGWOOD  
*Inventor of Photography*  
*(1771-1801)*

assisted in his schemes and experiments. When working on the production of a pearl-white earthenware body, he writes: "Sally is my chief help-mate in this as well as other things, and that she may not be hurried by



ETRURIA HALL 1770

having too many irons in the fire, as the phrase is, I have ordered the spinning wheel into the lumber room." And in another letter to Bentley, he says "Mrs. Wedgwood has tried our new teapots of which we send you one, and gives them her sanction, as the best and pleasantest in the hand she has ever used. I wish Mrs. Bentley would be so good to use this pot and favor me with her corrections that we may bring them out as perfect

1730

## THE STORY OF WEDGWOOD

1930

PATENT OFFICE

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as may be." Elsewhere he writes: "I speak from experience in Female taste, without which I should have made but a poor figure among the Pots, not one of which of any consequence is finished without the approbation of my Sally."

There were six children of the marriage who survived their father—3 sons and 3 daughters. The eldest daughter, Susannah or "Sukey," became the mother of Charles Darwin. The second son Josiah inherited the pottery; the third son, Thomas, became famous after his death as one of the inventors of Photography.

By the time of his marriage, Wedgwood had already accumulated a modest capital from the profits of his small Burslem works, and this added to his wife's dowry enabled a considerable expansion of business to take place. In 1766, he bought for £3,000 the Ridge House Estate, between Hanley and Newcastle, and on it proceeded to build a new house and a splendid new factory, to be named Etruria (in memory of the old Etruscan pottery in Italy). Here the Wedgwood factory remains to the present-day, though much of the estate was sold in the 1840's and the house—Etruria Hall—has now become the offices of the Shelton Iron & Coal Co. The new factory was opened on June 13th, 1769, and six vases were made in commemoration of the event. Wedgwood "threw" the vases while Bentley turned the wheel. They were painted with red classical figures on a black body, in imitation of the old Etruscan ware, and were inscribed "Artes Etruriaee Renascuntur." (The Arts of Etruria are re-born). Two of these vases are preserved in the Wedgwood Museum at Etruria.

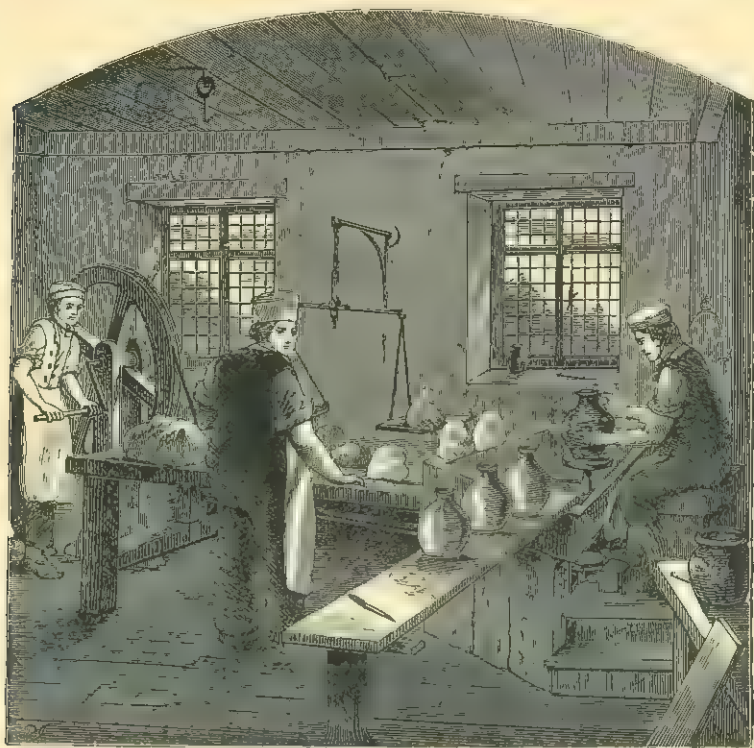
The family took up their abode at Etruria Hall on Nov. 11th the same year, and that day Josiah writes "To-night we are to sup 120 of our workmen in the Town Hall, Burslem."

The old Bell Works at Burslem were kept on, under the management of Cousin Thomas, for the production of 'useful' ware, while Etruria was first used only for the production of ornamental ware. Four years later, however, the 'useful' ware was also shifted to Etruria, and the Bell Works closed.





VIEW OF ETRURIA WORKS, ABOUT 1800



THROWING ROOM AT ETRURIA, C. 1790.



MODELLING ROOM AT ETRURIA, C. 1790



TWO VIEWS OF ONE OF THE FIRST FRUITS OF ETRURIA,  
THROWN BY WEDGWOOD, ASSISTED BY BENTLEY  
*(In the Wedgwood Museum, Etruria)*



PIECES OF DICED WARE IN JASPER



## THE INVENTION OF JASPER

*The Portland Vase*

The first 'ornamental' ware to be developed was what Wedgwood called 'black basalt'—a refinement of what Staffordshire potters had previously made in a cruder form under the name "Egyptian Black." The new black was richer in hue, finer in grain, and smoother in surface than any black made before his time. He used it both for 'useful' ware, and for large relief plaques, vases, busts, medallion portraits, seals and small intaglios. It formed also the ground on which he executed classical 'encaustic' paintings with a special palette of enamel colours that gave a matt surface when fired, and produced a similar effect to that of the old Greek and Etruscan vases.

On the eve of his introduction of the famous Jasper ware, he writes of his other wares (1773): "The Agate, the Green and other coloured glazes have had their day, and done pretty well, and are certain of a resurrection soon, for there are and ever will be a numerous class of people to purchase *shewy* and *cheap* things. The Cream-Colour is of a superior class, and I trust has not yet run its race by many degrees. The Black is sterling and will last for ever." The prophecy is remarkably accurate, though a little unfair to the green glaze and cauliflower—and a considerable under-statement as regards the cream-colour.

Wedgwood Jasper, on which, in the public mind, Wedgwood's fame probably rests, may be said to have been invented in 1774. It was the result of a tremendous series of experiments. Those of his trial pieces that have been preserved run to over ten thousand, and Josiah himself regretted bitterly that he had not kept his earlier trials. Jasper is a fine semi-porcelain body; it was made in all shades of blue and green, as well as in black and white. Wedgwood himself, who knew the labour of its invention and the difficulties of its manufacture, prized the Jasper above all his other productions. And potters and collectors ever since have valued Wedgwood Jasper both as a triumph of technique, and as a form of ornament

that is perfect of its kind, even if it is too formal for modern taste. The white classical reliefs on a blue, green or black background, whether on vases or cameos, are too well-known to need description here. The immediate need at the time was for good artists and modellers. An



THE WHITE BANK COURTYARD  
ETRURIA, C. 1790

excellent modeller had been found in William Hackwood, who had first been engaged in the year that Etruria opened. But, although six modellers were employed in 1775, Wedgwood writes that "we want half a dozen Hackwoods." The same year Bentley secured the services of John Flaxman, then only 20 years of age. Among other artists who designed and

modelled for Wedgwood were James Tassie, Joachim Smith, and last, but not least, George Stubbs, R.A., whose portraits of Josiah and Sarah and their family are also famous.

The outstanding triumph in Jasper was the copy of the "Barberini" or "Portland" Vase. The nature and history of the original need not here be recorded. Wedgwood's friend, Sir William Hamilton, had added it to his collection of classical art when British Ambassador at Naples; and eventually it had been sold to the Duke of Portland for £1,029. The latter heard that Wedgwood wished to copy it and lent it to him so that he might take a cast.

After four years of experiment to get the correct colour, surface and texture, Wedgwood was able to say that he had succeeded, and in 1790 presented his first copy for criticism, when it received the approbation of Sir William Hamilton and an appreciation from Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A. The number of copies made by Wedgwood is uncertain; there is evidence of 26 subscribers—the price varying apparently between 20 and 30 guineas. Replicas have often been made since by the Wedgwood firm.

In adopting classical designs for his Jasper, Wedgwood was following not only his own inclinations but also the best taste in the fashions of his time. His vases and medallions, each a triumph of delicate workmanship, harmonised admirably with the contemporary architecture of Adams and the furniture of Chippendale and Heppelwhite. Wedgwood himself would never have wished to have been acclaimed as a great artist. But some part of his greatness as a man and a potter lay in his appreciation of the value of the contribution that the artist could make to industry, and his determination to secure the services of the best artists of his time. It is evident also that he himself was an artist in his own material; he possessed the born craftsman's eye for a good and serviceable shape and knew the value of restraint in design and ornament. The graceful shapes and simple border decorations of his "Queensware" evolved by his own school of modellers and painters are perhaps even more highly appreciated by modern taste than they were in his own day.





THE PORTLAND VASE



THOMAS BENTLEY

1730-1780

*From the Medallion modelled by  
Joachim Smith in 1771*



JOHN FLAXMAN, R.A.  
*From the Medallion by himself*



WILLIAM HACKWOOD



## ROADS AND CANALS

The state of transport in Staffordshire in the middle of the 18th century has previously been alluded to. No great expansion of commerce could take place under such conditions; and it was the energetic steps that Wedgwood took to secure better transport facilities that first brought him prominently before the public. The only good roads in those days were turn-pike roads, where tolls were levied from wayfarers for repairs and extensions.

Burslem had no turnpike; and Arthur Young, after a brief experience of North Staffordshire lanes, wrote: "Let me persuade all travellers to avoid this terrible country!" In 1762 we find Wedgwood and others petitioning for a new turnpike road through Burslem to join the London and Liverpool road. An extract from the petition is worth quoting, as showing the extent to which the pottery trade had already grown since the beginning of the century:

"In Burslem and its neighbourhood are near 500 separate potteries for making various kinds of stone and earthenware, which find constant employment and support for near 7,000 people. The ware of these potteries is exported in vast quantities from London, Bristol, Liverpool, Hull, etc., to our several colonies in America and the West Indies, as well as to almost every port of Europe.....Many thousand tons of shipping are employed in carrying materials for the Burslem ware; and as much salt is consumed in glazing one species of it as pays annually near £5,000 duty to Government.....The trade flourishes so much as to have increased two-thirds within the last 14 years."

Allowing for some exaggeration natural in a petition of this character, the difference between this description of the industry and the estimate quoted previously of the trade fifty years before—when there were only some 60 potteries with an estimated trade of under £10,000 a year—is sufficiently striking. Even more striking perhaps was the fact that this

expansion had taken place, in the complete absence of good roads or canals, with ware and materials transported to and from the ports on a pack-saddle. The petition in question was only partially successful, owing to the opposition of certain vested interests; and another turnpike was projected in 1765, when Wedgwood writes to his brother John in London: "£2,000 is wanting for this road. My uncles Thomas and John (of the Big House) have, I am quite serious, at the first asking subscribed..... *five hundred pounds*. I have done the like, intending 2 or 300 of it for you, and if you choose any more you must let me know in time." Two years previously, wagons and carts had been introduced into the district for the first time.

The Duke of Bridgwater was at this time developing his estates in Cheshire by means of the famous Bridgwater Canal—the first of its kind. James Brindley, known as "the schemer," was the engineer in charge. Brindley was already well-known in the Potteries, and had recently put up a windmill near Burslem for grinding calcined flint for a pottery belonging to Josiah's uncle—John Wedgwood. About the same time, also, he had made a preliminary survey for a canal to connect the Trent and Mersey rivers. The success of the Bridgwater canal caused this project to be revived in 1764, when an association was formed to obtain parliamentary powers. For a whole year, Wedgwood, who saw the prime importance of this new method of transport, was engaging support, combating the opposition of rival interests, and getting Bentley to issue pamphlets showing all its advantages. At last, in May 1766, the necessary bill was passed by Parliament, and a Committee was formed to carry out the work. Brindley was appointed Surveyor General at the modest salary of £200 per annum, and Wedgwood acted as honorary treasurer, bearing his own expenses and having subscribed, in addition, £1,000 towards the cost of the scheme. On July 26th he cut the first sod at Brownhills between Burslem and Tunstall, before a great concourse of people, and an ox is said to have been roasted whole in honour of the occasion.

The canal was eventually completed in 1777—93 miles in length with 75 locks. It seems a meagre and out-of-date achievement to-day; but in those days it had the same importance and glamour as a new air-route to-day. The practical result of the canal was to reduce freights from 10d. to 1¼d. per ton per mile. It is also certain that the canal proved a profitable speculation to its founders. The canal passed right through Wedgwood's Etruria estate, and a branch was brought through the Works itself—a fore-runner of the modern railway siding.

It is amusing to note that the artist in Wedgwood wanted the canal to proceed with a few graceful curves; but he writes of the Clerk of the Works: "I could not prevail upon that Vandal to give me *one line* of grace—he must go the nearest and best way or Mr. Brindley would go mad!"

Mining operations have now sunk the Works below the level of the canal, but it is still the chief means of transporting clays and flints from Runcorn, near Liverpool, whither they have been conveyed by sea from Devon and Cornwall and the north coast of France.

Flints, and white clays from Devon, had been introduced by Astbury in the early part of the century, as ingredients of the earthenware cream colour body. But it was in 1768 that Cookworthy discovered pure white china clay and china stone in Cornwall. Cookworthy took out a patent to use these materials for the manufacture of porcelain. His project was not successful and five years later he sold the patent to Richard Champion. The latter attempted to get the patent extended, so as to have sole right to these materials for the next seven years. But, in the meantime, they had become standard ingredients in Wedgwood's Queen's Ware and white earthenware generally. Wedgwood naturally took an important part in opposing the granting of a monopoly to Champion. He has been criticised for trying to prevent a struggling inventor from getting his due reward. But Champion was not the inventor of china stone or its uses; and it seems that full justice was done when he was allowed the patent for using the material to make *porcelain*, while other potters were allowed to continue their use of it in making earthenware.





VIEW OF ETRURIA AND HANLEY, C. 1780  
*From a Water Colour*

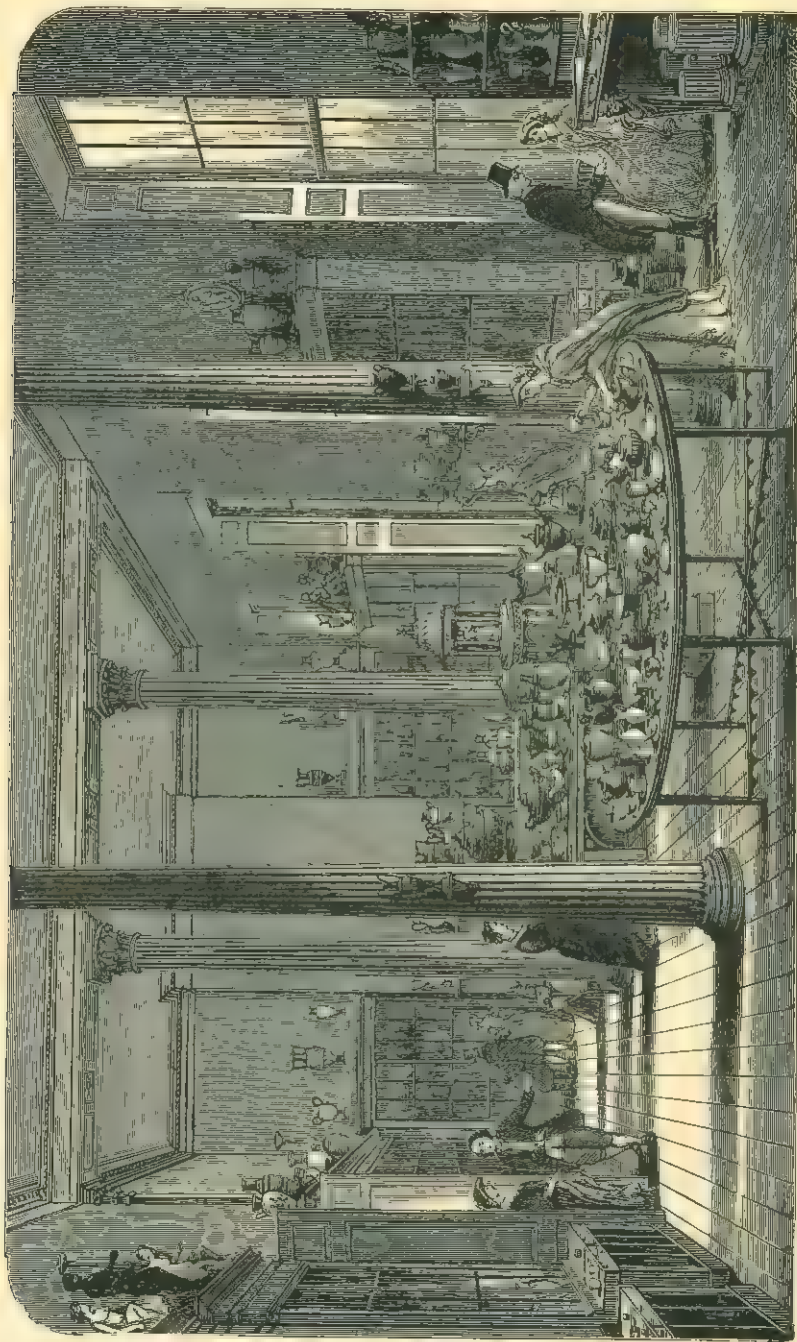
## LATER YEARS

*His Character and Temperament*

It was in the midst of one of the most active periods in Wedgwood's life, at the age of 37, that it was found necessary to amputate the leg that had caused him so much trouble ever since his first serious illness twenty years earlier. Operations had to be done without anaesthetics in those days, but on May 26, 1768, the operation was successfully performed under the supervision of his life-long friend, Dr. Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin. The patient made a rapid recovery, thanks to the assiduous care of his wife and the companionship of Bentley, who stayed with him till all danger was over. His health, never good, certainly improved as a result of the amputation.

Bentley's death in 1780 robbed Wedgwood of a dear friend and an excellent partner. For the next ten years he carried on his works alone, but in 1790 he took his three sons and his sister's son Thomas Byerley into partnership. In 1793, his sons John and Thomas retired from the firm and conveyed their shares to the younger Josiah. In this way, the style of the firm changed from "Wedgwood and Bentley" between 1768 and 1780, to "Wedgwood" from 1780-90, and "Wedgwood, Son and Byerley" from 1793 to 1795.

Three years after Bentley's death, Wedgwood was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, to whom a year previously he had explained a new and ingenious instrument for measuring high temperatures. Five papers by him were published by the Society, three relating to his "pyrometer" and two to the composition of clays and chemistry. Although he was not a great chemist—and the science of chemistry was then in its infancy—Wedgwood's scientific knowledge was far in advance of that possessed by most of his brother potters; and he must have been well acquainted with the discoveries of his friend Dr. Priestley. What is more important—he possessed the scientific mind, in an age when that was a very rare qualification. "Everything yields to experiment" was his phrase; and he did his



WEDGWOOD AND BYERLEY'S SHOWROOM (1790'S), YORK STREET, ST. JAMES'  
*Wood Engraving from Mezzotint of 1809*

best to convince his workmen that things did not happen without a cause and that if a given set of materials were treated in a certain way, a certain result—good or bad—was bound to follow. He was also fortunately methodical; and his jottings in his "Commonplace Book" and other note books indicate that there are few things known to the modern potter that Wedgwood did not discover for himself.

His personality is clearly revealed in his numerous letters that have been preserved, and no one who reads those letters can fail to be impressed, not only by his indomitable energy, but even more by his very lovable character and liberal mind. His public and private acts testify also to the warmth and generosity of his disposition. He was a great business man, but not a mercenary one; and devoted himself to his work for its intrinsic interest or for the sake of achievement rather than for private gain alone. "So far from being afraid of other people getting our patterns," he wrote to Bentley, "we should glory in it, throw out all the hints we can and if possible have all the Artists in Europe working after our models. This would be noble and would suit both our dispositions and sentiments much better than all narrow, mercenary, selfish channels. . . . There is nothing relating to business I so much wish for as being released from these degrading selfish chains, these mean selfish fears of other people copying my works."

He gave freely to the causes in which he believed, and not merely to those which might indirectly help his business. In 1760, when still comparatively a poor man, we find him giving £10 towards the establishment of a second Free School in Burslem. And in 1792, when a wealthy man, he subscribes £250 to succour the people of Poland against the Russian Invasion. Although his trade depended to a considerable extent on the patronage of royalty and the gentry, there was nothing of the sycophant in his expressed opinions. In 1778, on the occasion of the War following the American Declaration of Independence, he tells Bentley that he "bless'd his stars and Lord North that America is free" as one refuge "from the iron hand of tyranny." And in one of the last letters to his



partner, he writes : "*Every member of the State must either have a vote or be a slave.*" The same general sentiments are expressed to his son in 1790: "A real parliamentary reform is what we most stand in need of, and for this I would willingly devote my time, the most precious thing I have to bestow, or anything else by which I could serve so truly noble a cause."

A year earlier (1789) he wrote to Erasmus Darwin, "I know you will rejoice with me in the glorious revolution which has taken place in France. The politicians tell me that as a manufacturer I shall be ruined if France has her liberty, but I am willing to take my chance in that respect, nor yet do I see that the happiness of one nation includes in it the misery of its next neighbour." The French Revolution and the War that followed certainly did injure his trade and that of his son, but this did not alter their sentiments on the question of political liberty.

These sentiments were shared by Bentley, who, though a Liverpool merchant, denounced the slave trade on which Liverpool then thrived. Wedgwood was an ardent supporter and a generous subscriber to the Society for abolishing the Slave Trade; and one of his best known cameos depicts a slave kneeling in chains with the inscription : "Am I not a man and a brother?"

Wedgwood's correspondence also sheds a pleasant side-light on his domestic life. Amidst the pressure of all his business activities, he found time to take his children to and from school, to ride with them before breakfast, and to give them lessons himself. "Before breakfast," he writes, "we read English together in the newspaper or any book we happen to have in the course of reading . . . with the globe and maps before us."

In 1790, he partially retired from the more active duties of his business and took longer holidays than before. But his health continued to give anxiety and after a brief illness he passed away on January 3rd, 1795, at the age of 64. His grave is in the Churchyard at Stoke, and in the chancel of that church there is a monument to his memory by Flaxman, with the following inscription : "*He converted a rude and inconsiderable manufactory into an elegant Art and an important part of the National Commerce.*"

A more recent tribute to Wedgwood's work by a modern ceramic expert may also be quoted: "His influence was so powerful, and his personality so dominant, that all other English potters worked on the principles he had laid down, and thus a fresh impulse and a new direction was given to the pottery of England and of the civilized world. He is the only potter of whom it may truly be said that the whole subsequent course of pottery manufacture has been influenced by his individuality, skill and taste."<sup>\*</sup>



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<sup>\*</sup>William Burton. English Earthenware.



THE WEDGWOOD FAMILY IN THE GROUNDS AT ETRURIA HALL

*By George Stubbs, R.A., 1780*

*(In the possession of Mrs. Cecil Wedgwood)*



## *Subsequent History of the Firm*

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Josiah Wedgwood left a considerable fortune to be divided among six surviving children and his widow. His second son Josiah, partner at Etruria since 1790, inherited the Etruria estate (then 380 acres in all) and the Works.

The next twenty years and more were bad times for trade, owing to the Napoleonic Wars; and in 1811, Josiah II confessed in a letter that "the business is not worth carrying on, and if I could withdraw my capital from it, I would tomorrow." At the same time, he was trying, without much success, to make translucent china, but the experiment was dropped in 1815 and not finally revived till 1878, since when it has been a regular and rapidly increasing portion of the firm's productions. After the Peace in 1815, trade began to revive, and a Frenchman travelling in that year says of Staffordshire earthenware: "Its excellent workmanship, its solidity, the advantage which it possesses of sustaining the action of fire, its fine glaze, impenetrable to acids, the beauty and convenience of its form, and the cheapness of its price, have given rise to a commerce so active and universal that in travelling from Paris to Petersburg, from Amsterdam to the farthest part of Sweden, and from Dunkirk to the extremity of the South of France, one is served at every inn with English ware. France, Portugal and Italy are supplied, and vessels are loaded with it for the East and West Indies and the Continent of America."\* The same year, a Wedgwood service was supplied to Napoleon at St. Helena.

In 1828, trade seems to have been again depressed, and the London Showrooms were given up. The stock of ware and old moulds and models was sold for £16,000. In the eyes of Josiah's descendants, this sale has been considered something of a disaster, as in this way many pieces of

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\*M. Fanjas de Saint Font.





A MODERN WEDGWOOD HAND-PAINTED DESIGN  
ON CREAM-COLOURED EARTHENWARE



OLD WEDGWOOD HAND-PAINTED DESIGNS  
REVIVED IN THE PRESENT CENTURY

great historical interest were dissipated. It is clear that Josiah II had not his father's keen interest in potting. But he was certainly no idler or spend-thrift, and Charles Darwin his son-in-law wrote of him: "He was the very type of an upright man, with the clearest judgment. I do not believe any power on earth could have made him swerve an inch from what he considered the right course." After the great Reform Bill of 1832, he was elected as Whig Member of Parliament for Stoke-on Trent, and voted for the repeal of the Corn Laws. He died in 1843.

His eldest son Josiah III had joined him in the business in 1823, but retired in 1842, and the business was now carried on by the third son, Francis (1800-1888), who had been working at Etruria since 1827. In the period 1850-70 trade revived considerably, and various new types of ware were started, "Parian," "Lavender," and "Majolica." In 1875, a showroom in London was restarted.

The fourth generation began at Etruria with Godfrey in 1859, Clement Francis in 1863, and Laurence in 1865. At this time, the French artist, Emile Lessore, and later Thomas Allen were the principal designers. The eldest of the fifth generation—the late Major Cecil Wedgwood D.S.O.—first came to the firm in 1884; his cousin Mr. Frank Wedgwood started in 1889; while another in the same generation, Mr. Kennard L. Wedgwood, starting in 1894, became the firm's representative in America in 1906. From 1902, John E. Goodwin has been the firm's principal designer, and has built upon the great traditions rather than imitated the styles of the past.

Wars are the chief enemy of trade, particularly in the case of an industry such as that of Pottery dependant so largely upon export. The Boer War caused a big set-back at the beginning of the present century, especially as the directors of the firm had left business temporarily to serve in the War, and uphill work awaited them on their return. The chief features of the firm's progress in the decade preceding the Great War were the expansion of trade with the Continent, the opening of a showroom in Paris, and the extension of the American trade, under Mr. Kennard



HEADS OF THE WEDGWOOD FIRM SINCE 1795

Wedgwood. Among the outstanding incidents of that period were : the provision of a huge china service of 1,282 pieces for "the White House," Washington, during President Roosevelt's term of office; the opening in 1906 of the Etruria Museum for the preservation of historical pieces and documents, and the starting of "Powder Blue" decorations and China lustre wares.

It was in this period also that a school of free-hand paintresses was started at Etruria, under the direction of Alfred and Louise Powell, and rapidly proved its value by a freshness and charming variety of design only too rare in an age of standardised patterns.

During the late War, the Works suffered a severe loss in the death of Major Cecil Wedgwood, D.S.O., killed in action in 1916 during the battle of the Somme. His daughter, Miss Audrey Wedgwood acted as Secretary at the Works from 1919 till her marriage in 1928, when she was succeeded by her cousin Josiah. Two other direct descendants of the founder, in the sixth generation, are now connected with the firm—Hensleigh Cecil and Clement Tom. Mrs. Cecil Wedgwood has continued to take an active part in organising the welfare work of the factory. A welfare worker was appointed in 1908, the first in the Pottery Industry and some years before welfare work became a generally recognised part of the duty of a manufacturer.

The Bicentenary of the birth of Josiah Wedgwood was celebrated by the City of Stoke-on-Trent from May 19th to 24th, 1930, when distinguished visitors from all parts of the world attended. The proceedings the first day were opened by H.R.H. Princess Mary. The celebrations included a unique Exhibition of the modern Pottery of the district, a Historical Exhibition, and a Pageant in which some 5,000 local workers took part. The special episode in the Pageant dealing with the life and times of Josiah Wedgwood was undertaken by Messrs. Wedgwoods' workpeople, of whom some 700 took part, as well as eight members of the Wedgwood family.

On October 31st in the Bicentenary year, the death of Mr. Frank Wedgwood came as a great blow to the whole of the British Pottery



industry. "Mr. Frank" had been Chairman of Directors since 1916 and actively connected with the business for over 40 years. His death was mourned by large numbers in Staffordshire and elsewhere, and his memory remains especially dear to the workpeople of Etruria whom he loved and who loved him. Mr. Kennard L. Wedgwood succeeds him as Chairman of Directors.

Etruria now employs some 900 people, perhaps double the number employed at the height of its founder's career. There is still a large propor-



AERIAL VIEW OF THE WEDGWOOD WORKS

tion of skilled handicraftsmen, modellers, throwers, hand-painters and the like; and beauty, skill and variety have not yet been sacrificed on the altar of mass-production. The craftsman retains his proud place, aided by modern technique; and the eighteenth century buildings rub shoulders with the new electric and gas-fired kilns.

It remains to be added that there has never been a strike at Etruria in the 160 years of its existence and that many are there to-day whose fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers spent their working lives maintaining the high traditions of Wedgwood.

## *List of Books on Wedgwood*

- The Life of Josiah Wedgwood (2 vols) by ELIZA METEYARD  
*Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1865*  
The Wedgwoods by L. JEWITT *Virtue & Co. Publishers, 1865*  
Josiah Wedgwood by A. H. CHURCH  
*Seeley & Co. Publishers, 1894*  
Life of Wedgwood by SAMUEL SMILES, 1894  
Josiah Wedgwood and his Pottery by WILLIAM BURTON  
*Cassell & Co. Publishers, 1922*  
Chats on Wedgwood Ware by H. BARNARD  
*T. Fisher Unwin, Publishers, 1924*  
Josiah Wedgwood & Sarah by ELBERT HUBBARD, 1906  
Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood by JULIA WEDGWOOD  
*Macmillan & Co. Publishers, 1915*  
A History of the Wedgwood Family  
by JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD  
*The St. Catherine Press Ltd. Publishers, 1908*  
Wedgwood Pedigrees by RT. HON. JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD  
and JOSHUA G. E. WEDGWOOD  
*Titus Wilson & Son, Publishers, 1925*

## *Wedgwood Museum*

The Wedgwood Museum, founded in 1906, with Mr. John Cook as Curator, contains many famous examples of Josiah Wedgwood's work as well as his letters, note books, and trial pieces, and original documents connected with the Wedgwood works and family, dating back to the 16th century.

The Wedgwood works and museum are open to visitors every week-day except Saturday.

*The Address of the firm is*  
JOSIAH WEDGWOOD AND SONS LIMITED  
*Etruria, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire*  
*Nearest Station, Etruria, on the L.M.S. Railway*

# *The Wedgwood Trade Marks*

PERIOD 1759 to 1769

WEDGWOOD    Wedgwood    Wedgwood  
*Earliest Mark*

PERIOD 1769 to 1780

WEDGWOOD  
& BENTLEY



NOTE. *The Wedgwood & Bentley mark is never found  
on Blue and White Jasper Vases*

1759 to PRESENT DAY

WEDGWOOD

*Impressed on Earthenware and Jasper*

1879 to PRESENT DAY

*Mark on China only*



WEDGWOOD

*One or other of these trade marks will be found on the bottom  
of all genuine Wedgwood pieces*

*If additions to the Name or alterations in the spelling are found,  
they are not the products of the Wedgwood firm*



GILBERT WEDGWOOD of the Overhouse, Burslem (1588-1678)

THOMAS WEDGWOOD of the Churchyard House, Burslem (1617-1679)

THOMAS WEDGWOOD of the Churchyard House, Burslem (1660-1716)

THOMAS WEDGWOOD of the Churchyard House, Burslem (1687-1739)

JOSIAH WEDGWOOD, F.R.S.  
1730-1795

R. W. Darwin, = Susannah  
F.R.S. 1765-1817

JOSIAH WEDGWOOD, M.P.  
1769-1843

TOM WEDGWOOD  
1771-1805

Charles R. Darwin, F.R.S. = Emma  
1808-96

JOSIAH  
1793-1880

FRANCIS WEDGWOOD  
1800-1888

Hensleigh

GODFREY WEDGWOOD  
1833-1905

CLEMENT FRANCIS WEDGWOOD  
1840-1889

LAWRENCE WEDGWOOD  
1844-1913

Alfred Allen

LUCIE = CECIL WEDGWOOD  
D.S.O. 1863-1916.

FRANCIS HAMILTON  
1867-1930 D.L., J.P.

Josiah Clement  
M.P.,  
D.S.O.

Sir Ralph L. Wedgwood  
C.B., C.M.G.

KENNARD LAWRENCE  
b. 1873 *Chairman of Directors*  
(*President of American House*)

Bertram Hensleigh

DORIS AUDREY  
b. 1894

CLEMENT TOM  
b. 1907

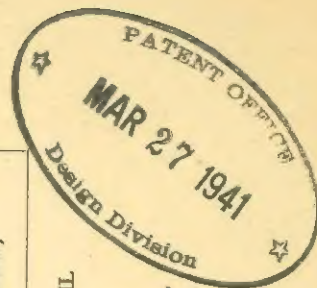
JOSIAH  
b. 1899  
(*Managing Director*)

JOHN HAMILTON  
b. 1907

HENSLEIGH CECIL  
b. 1908

WEDGWOOD POTTERS

(N.B. Names in Capitals connected with the firm.)







RETURN TO  
DESIGN DIV.